



REVIEWED by C. F. Bratz DATE 8/30/89

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(X) RELEASE (X) DECLASSIFIED
 () UNCLASSIFIED () DECLASSIFY IN PART
 () CONFIDENTIAL () Non-responsive info.
 FOI E.O. 12812-108 3999

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ACTION NEA-11

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7) CLASSIFY as _____
 () DOWNGRADE TS to () S or () O. CA

INFO	OCT-01	EUR-12	ADS-00	IO-14	HA-05	ACDA-12	CIAE-00
PM-05	H-01	INR-10	L-03	NSAE-00	NSC-05	PA-01	
SP-02	SS-15	ICA-11	SMS-01	RP-10	SR-04	TRSE-00	

-----018832 282150Z /62
R 251128Z FEB 80 DELAYED DUE TO SVC ACTION BY QC/T

FM AMCONSUL PESHAWAR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 607
INFO AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
DIA WASH DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L PESHAWAR 069

E.O. 12065: RDS-4 2/24/00 (ARCHARD, D.B) OR-M
TAGS: PINS, MOPS, SHUM, AF, UR
SUBJECT: (C) USE OF CHEMICAL AGENTS IN AFGHANISTAN

REF: STATE 020775

1. (C) ENTIRE TEXT.

2. SOVIET AND/OR AFGHAN MILITARY HAVE RECENTLY USED WHAT SEVERAL SOURCES TERM POISON GAS AGAINST MUSLIM INSURGENTS AND CIVILIAN POPULATION. INCIDENTS REPORTEDLY OCCURRED IN BADAQSHAN, TAKHAR AND WARDAK PROVINCES. THESE ACCOUNTS ARE BY FAR THE MOST DETAILED WHICH I HAVE HEARD OF SOVIETS USE OF CHEMICAL WARFARE, AND I BELIEVE THEM. ACCOUNTS OF SUCH USAGE WERE PROBABLY BROADCAST ON RADIO AUSTRALIA ON FEB. 19 OR 20.

3. THE MOST CREDIBLE REPORTS OF THE USE OF GAS WERE
COLLECTED IN CHITRAL DISTRICT ON FEB. 16 AND 17 BY
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RADIO AUSTRALIA CORRESPONDENT GEOFF HERIOT. I

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CONSIDER HERIOT TO BE A SOUND, CAREFUL JOURNALIST; HIS SOURCES, IN SEPARATE LOCATIONS, WERE NEWLY-ARRIVED REFUGEES FROM BADAQ SHAN AND NURISTAN. HERIOT'S DESCRIPTION OF HIS INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUE AND THE CONSISTENT PATTERN OF REFUGEE RESPONSES WENT FAR TOWARD CONVINCING ME OF THE STORIES CREDIBILITY.

4. HERIOT'S ACCOUNTS HAD IN COMMON THE FOLLOWING: SOVIET OR AFGHAN AIRCRAFT (WITNESSES ALL ASSUMED SOVIETS WERE FLYING AFGHAN AIRCRAFT) DROPPED GAS CANISTERS ON CONCENTRATIONS OF INSURGENTS OR VILLAGERS IN AREAS WHERE FIGHTING WAS OCCURRING. CYLINDRICAL CANISTERS WERE ABOUT 18 INCHES LONG. ON IMPACT, BLUE OR GRAY GAS BILLOWED OUT. GAS CAUSED EYES TO TEAR, COUGHING, LOSS OF MOTOR CONTROL, SENSELESSNESS, AND, IN MANY INSTANCES, DEATH. VILLAGERS WERE ABLE TO AVOID EFFECTS BY TAKING REFUGE IN BODIES OF WATER.

5. ONE INCIDENT REPORTEDLY TOOK PLACE IN VILLAGE DARA

WARDUOG, BETWEEN ZEBAK AND BAHARAK IN BADAQSHAN ABOUT JAN. 29. AFTER MUSLIM FORCES FOUGHT SOVIETS INVADING FROM ACROSS OXUS RIVER. ABOUT 80 VILLAGES (50 CHILDREN, 10 WOMEN AND 20 MEN) WHOSE NAMES EYEWITNESS COULD LIST, REPORTEDLY DIED FROM EFFECTS OF GAS. SECOND BADAQASHAN INCIDENT OCCURED AT VILLAGE DRON, SOUTH OF SEBAK ABOUT FEB. 3. SEVERAL PERSONS REPORTEDLY DIED FROM GAS WHICH WAS USED AFTER SOVIET TANKS GOT BOGGED DOWN IN HEAVY FIGHTING WITH MUSLIMS. EYE WITNESS REFUGEE SOURCE ARRIVED IN CHITRAL DAY HE TALKED TO HERIOT.

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6. IN NURISTAN, THIRD EYEWITNESS REPORTED, AIRCRAFT DROPPED GAS CANISTERS ON VILLAGE KAMDESH ABOUT FEB. 11. ABOUT 10 PERSONS ARE SAID TO HAVE DIED AS A RESULT.

7. MOST CREDIBLE ACCOUNT I HAVE HEARD FIRST-HAND CAME FROM TWO WARDAK TRIBAL LEADERS ON FEB. 19. THE TWO PATHAN CHIEFS RESEMBLED BIBLICAL PATRIARCHS AS MUCH IN THEIR PRIDE, AND GRIM DETERMINATION AS IN THEIR HAWK-LIKE PROFILES AND FLOWING BEARDS. ACCORDING TO THEM, THEY COULD PERSONALLY ACCOUNT FOR AT LEAST ONE HUNDRED

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FIFTY GAS CANISTERS WHICH HAD BEEN DROPPED IN WARDAK PROVINCE. INCIDENTS OCCURED BEFORE SOVIETS DECEMBER INVASION.

8. CANISTERS WERE DESCRIBED AS CONE-SHAPED, ABOUT ONE METER LONG, 18 INCHES IN DIAMETER, WITH TRIGGER RODS PROTRUDING FROM TIP AND BASE. MOST FAILED TO OPERATE ON IMPACT. GAS ISSUING FROM THOSE WHICH DID CAUSED EYES AND NOSE TO WATER, LOSS OF MOTOR CONTROL, AND SENSELESSNESS FOR 24 HOURS. ON REGAINING CONSCIOUSNESS, VICTIMS HAVE HEADACHES AND FITS OF NERVES. NONE DIED FROM GAS POISONING, HOWEVER.

9. ACCORDING TO THE WARDAKS, LAST USE OF GAS WAS AT VILLAGE OF HAFDOSIAL, NEAR SULTAN KHEL, ON THE KABUL-KANDAHAR ROAD, ABOUT DEC. 14. MUSLIM INSURGENTS HAD AMBUSHED A CONVOY. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE INCLUDED DROPPING GAS CANNISTERS. TRIBESMEN SAY THEY CAN COUNTERACT EFFECTS BY COVERING NOSE AND MOUTH WITH WET CLOTH AND BY HIDING IN TRENCHES.

10. FROM TAKHAR PROVINCE, I LEARNED OF GAS ATTACKS FROM AN ETHNIC TAJIK CHIEF WHO IS CURRENTLY IN PESHAWAR. ON FEB. 10 THE MAN REPORTED THAT GAS HAD BEEN DROPPED ON VILLAGE DASTI ARCHI, TAKHAR. ON FEB. 2. ACCORDING TO HIM, NO ONE DIED FROM EFFECTS OF GAS.

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11. FOR DEPARTMENT: WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING REACTION TO DESCRIPTIONS OF GAS CANNISTERS AND ITS EFFECTS.

12. EMBASSY COMMENT: SOME OF THIS INFORMATION, FROM THE SAME SOURCES, WAS REPORTED VIA DAO CHANNELS LAST WEEK. ARCHARD

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